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FINLAND

The Buffer-State of Europe

— BY —

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PREFACE

It seems to me that the American press, formerly so liberal and broad-minded, has lost all interest in the small, but highly educated countries of Europe (with the exception, of course, of "Little Belgium" and "Brave Little Serbia"), and in their struggle for freedom and independence. This attitude on the part of the press is wholly wrong.

There are in this free country of ours so many people who ought to, and should, know about the possible outcome of the present war for the small European nations. For this reason I thought it necessary to publish one of the papers read by me before Scandinavian, Finnish and German audiences in this city. Really new and educated Americans, I trust, will be interested in my little resumé of Finnish history, and they will be glad to learn of the conditions actually existing in Finland, a country which has enjoyed centuries of political independence; a country with a standard educational system, and with an inborn love of liberty.

JOHANNES HOVING.

New York City, April, 1915.

FINLAND, THE BUFFER-STATE OF EUROPE.

Although it may seem inappropriate at this early date to discuss the terms of peace which will end the present war, there are, nevertheless, a number of things to be taken into consideration to-day requiring a deeper insight into the actual state of affairs, than it is possible to obtain within a short space of time.

In this connection we proceed from the assumption that the central powers of Europe will defeat the Allies, for if this should not be the case we would, for a long time to come, have to abandon all thought of freedom, justice and humanity in the world. If barbarous Russia, ever-hypocritical England or revengeful France were to dictate the terms of peace, the consequences would be incalculable. But that shall never be.

The following embodies a detailed discussion of Russian policies with special reference to Finland and Scandinavia, and on this basis we shall attempt to show how important it is for Germany to stop Russia's policy of expansion, also in the North, and, likewise, how important it is for the entire Germanic race to separate Russia from Europe by neutralized states. For, unless this be done, the danger of Russia breaking the peace or renewing her intrigues is close at hand, and a new war will ensue ere long.

The only country powerful and strong enough to check Russia in the North is Germany. We understand, of course, that Sweden and Norway would do their utmost to defend and protect their independence, and if Russia were to attempt an invasion of these countries she would certainly meet with greater resistance than anticipated. On the other hand, it is obvious that the Norse lands, unaided, are unable to restrain Russia, and they cannot count upon assistance from any other country but Germany. Great Britain, even if so inclined, will not be strong enough—especially after the present war—to fight Russia on the border-line of Europe. And yet it is a matter of serious consequence to England if Russia secures an open port at the Atlantic, as Russia would thus be enabled to win the upper hand in a possible decisive struggle between Great Britain and herself—and such a conflict is not remote.

Should Finland and Norway lose all of the great and important North?

Should Finland be wiped off the map?

That must not come! Russia herself must first be humbled—and that will be.

Looking at the map of Northern Europe our attention is drawn to a small country covering an area of about 144,000 square miles, wedged in between Sweden, Norway and Russia. Only in the East it has an open frontier toward Russia; in the North it borders on Sweden and Norway; in the West it is washed by the waves of the Gulf of Bothnia and the so-called Aland Sea; while the Gulf of Finland forms its southern boundary.

The population is composed of ca. 3,000,000 Finns of Finnish, and 400,000 of Swedish origin.

This is Finland.

The time when the Finns first settled in Finland has not as yet been definitely fixed. We know the Finns to have come from the East, from Asia, and we are almost certain as to their Mongolian origin; we know a considerable number of kindred tribes living in Northern Siberia, viz., Syrjanen, Votiaks, Ostiaks, etc.; and we are also acquainted with the Esthonians, another branch of the Finnish family located in the Baltic provinces, south of the Gulf of Finland. It is likewise a well known fact that the Lapps, settled in the north of Finland, of Sweden and Norway, are close relatives; but the time when all of these people began, or completed, their westward migration has not been fixed historically.

On the coast of Finland—West, Southwest and South—we find people of Swedish descent, who, probably in the course of many centuries, emigrated from Sweden to Finland, but who were certainly settled there prior to the immigration of the Finnish Finns. These two races have absolutely no relation to each other. Genuine Finnish speech is wholly different from all other languages (possibly with the exception of Magyar), which goes to show that the Finns must be differentiated from all other people. They are members of the Finno-Ugric race.

In 1157 Eric the Saint, King of Sweden, undertook a crusade to Finland for the purpose of converting the Finns, and this first crusade was followed by others. The final expedition, under the direction of Torgils Knutsson, took the Swedes to the east of Finland, where is now situated the City of Wiborg, founded by

Torgils in 1249. From this time on Finland was united with Sweden, and, in 1581, became a Grand Duchy, ruled over by the second son of Gustavus Wasa, Sweden's great king.

Finland was given the same liberal constitution which had been adopted by Sweden, and a close friendship linked the people of both countries during all wars between Sweden and other states.

Even at this time (and until after 1809) Finland was the apple of dissension between Sweden, a great power, and Russia, a rising state; and all battles for possession of the little country were fought on Finnish soil.

Under Charles XII Sweden was for the first time defeated by Russia. By the peace of 1720 the south-eastermost part of Finland was ceded to Russia, then ruled by Peter the Great, who had plundered, burned and almost completely ruined the whole country.

In two subsequent wars between Sweden and Russia (1741 to 1743, and 1788 to 1790), the latter gained only little. But, finally, by the Tilsit Agreement (1807), Napoleon "presented" Czar Alexander I of Russia with the whole of Finland, his object being the punishment of Gustavus IV of Sweden for attempting to defy Napoleonic power.

By the same peace contract Czar Alexander agreed to close Russian ports to England, and Russia—so it is claimed—prepared for war with England, without, however, having any ill designs upon Sweden. This is, at least, what Alexander I most solemnly declared to the Swedish Ambassador at St. Petersburg on February 21, 1808, and his statement was repeated to the King of Sweden by the Russian Ambassador at Stockholm. Nevertheless, Russian troops crossed the Swedish border on that very day. Sweden, then weakened by internal troubles which were promoted by Russian and British gold, lost the war, and—by the peace of Fredrikshamn (1809)—ceded Finland to Russia.

The Finnish people fought with traditional bravery to escape separation from Sweden, but Sweden's power was broken. This struggle has been immortalized by the Finnish poet, Runeberg, in "The Songs of Ensign Stahl," a piece of poetry which, in beauty of conception and composition, is unsurpassed by any other literature. Even before the conclusion of peace negotiations, *Alexander I pledged his imperial word to preserve the laws and constitution*

of his new subjects in Finland, and relying upon this pledge the States assembled in the Borgo Diet (1809), took the oath of allegiance to the Czar of Russia, Grand Duke of Finland. In 1812, Alexander I, a liberal ruler who was fond of his subjects, united the eastern portion of Finland, which had previously been conquered by Peter the Great, with the newly acquired Grand Duchy, so that the map of the country reassumed the appearance which it had under the old Swedish regime.

The oath taken by Alexander I, viz., to respect the laws and constitution of Finland, was also sworn to by his successors: Nicholas I; Alexander II; Alexander III; and Nicholas II, the present Czar. The first two of these rulers felt in duty bound to live up to their sacred pledge.

Under Alexander II an invigorating breeze of liberalism swept over Russia and Finland. He it was who, in 1863, again called together the Finnish Diet. His assassination by the bombs of Nihilists (March 13, 1881) terminated the entire Russian Reform-Period, and—under the rule of Alexander III—Pan-Slavism flourished. The Pan-Slavists insist that all Slavs and all races conquered by them be welded together into one political union, in order thus to make the "Holy Russian Empire" powerful enough to subdue all other races and countries. The methods to be applied, and the time required for accomplishing this purpose, are of no consequence. Russia can bide her time until that lofty aim shall be attained.

The present Czar is the willing leader of the Pan-Slavist Party. Innumerable times in the twenty years of his rule he has broken his pledge or committed perjury. His character is anything but august. On the contrary, he is malicious, implacable and vindictive; he displays a mystic faith in his divine mission; and since his ascension to the throne he has availed himself of all means at his command for the oppression and enslavement of his subjects. To believe that the Czar is under the influence of a so-called "Party of Grand Dukes," is a gross error. The autocracy of Czar Nicholas II is absolute.

The Finnish people have proved to be a most reliable support of Russia's throne; they have made innumerable sacrifices whenever Russia was at war, but Finland never enjoyed the gratitude to which she was entitled by her unswerving loyalty. The radical

change of government forced upon Finland on February 17, 1899, aroused universal indignation in the entire civilized world. The notorious Bobriboff, a genuine, though shrewd, barbarian, was appointed Governor-General of Finland by the Czar. Chicaneries of all sorts were now on the daily calendar. Homes were searched by masked detectives, even at night; any charge was welcomed by the Russified police and gendarmes; and a considerable number of respected citizens were exiled.

The Finnish army, and even the glorious old Finnish Guard, were disbanded; their arms and colors taken to Russia; and their officers discharged. Barracks built with Finnish funds were filled with Russian soldiers. All importation of arms to Finland was prohibited and the entire nation disarmed.

Russians familiar with the Finnish tongue disguised themselves as peasants and made propaganda for the Russian Government in the rural districts of the country. They promised the peasants general prosperity and the distribution of the property of the wealthy as soon as Russia should be in complete control. At the same time, the Russian nationalist press urged the Government to continue its policy of violence against the autonomy of Finland, supposed to be guaranteed by the oath of the Russian Czar. But any attack upon the vicious press was forbidden. Finally, Finland's politicians were arrested; locked up in Russian dungeons; or exiled to Siberia or the interior of Russia. Loyal officials and judges were discharged, and all preparations were made for the total subjection of Finland.

The Russian Pan-Slavists were unable to bear the sight of Finland's splendid finances and of the general superiority of conditions existing there. *It should always be borne in mind that the Grand Duchy of Finland has its own laws, its own government—the Senate—and that the Governor-General, the Czar's representative, is merely chairman of the Senate. Only by joint action of the Grand Duke and the Diet is it possible to amend the laws of the country.*—A custom line separates Finland from Russia, and Finland has its own monetary standard, viz: Mark (18c) and Penni.—The national debt is insignificant; the interest thereon is low; and foreign creditors have refused to exchange Finnish for Russian government bonds. Moreover, Russian manufacturers have protested against the abolition of the custom line, claiming

that such action would ruin Russian industries. The Russian authorities, however, compelled Finland to pay a sort of indemnity, amounting to 20,000,000 Marks per annum. And why was this done? Because the authorities—the Czar—will no longer permit Finland to have an army of her own. The Czar fears that Finnish officers and men (who have always been the cream of the entire Russian army) might now turn against him. And that is the reason why Finland must pay!

At the very beginning of this century when the aforesaid events took place under Bobriboff's regime, hundreds of spies were sent to Sweden and Norway to make reliable maps of bridges, highways, etc., and to prepare the ground for a blow aimed at the Scandinavian people. But the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war eliminated this danger, and the terrible defeat inflicted upon Russia by the Japanese undermined the Nationalist Party of Russia.

This war, like all wars waged by Russia, was caused by the machinations of a clique of intriguants in close relation to the Czar, who wantonly started hostilities against Japan in order to reap financial profits from the occupation of Manchuria and Korea. However, Japan proved to be decisively superior to the Russians; Russia's navy was destroyed, and the crushing defeats of the army revealed the utter depravity of conditions existing in the Russian Empire.

During and after the war, political murders were a matter of routine; Bobriboff, Plewe, Grand Duke Sergei and others were thus done away with. When the war was over, the tension all over Russia became unbearable, and as soon as the people realized that all reports of victories were invented, they gave expression to their rage by the great strike which broke out in the autumn of 1905. The outcome of this demonstration was that, after causing a large number of people in the streets of St. Petersburg to be shot, the cowardly Czar granted Russia a parliament, the Duma, and declared himself a constitutional Monarch with limited power, at the same time pledging himself hereafter to abide by the decision of the Duma in a various number of questions. Russia now firmly believed in the transformation of the "Autocrat of all the Russians" into a constitutional Monarch.

In Finland, also, a general strike broke out. Prince Obolensky, the Governor-General, was removed from office; the Constitution amended; the old Diet of four orders (representing nobles, clergy, burghers and peasants) was superseded by a single chamber; proportional universal suffrage was introduced; all unlawfully discharged officials were reappointed; the police department was reorganized; and the gendarmes were forced to leave the country. Censorship was abolished. Finland was given a new government headed by the foremost men in the land, and a constitution, more liberal than that of any other country, was adopted, while—in Russia— assembled the first Parliament chosen in accordance with a new and liberal election law.

But the time of rejoicing was not long. Soon after the retirement of the exceedingly liberal-minded Count Witte, the Czar appointed as his new Prime Minister the notorious Stolypin. Stolypin's regime was barbarous: He persecuted the liberals, removed them from office in utter disregard of the law, and sent them to prison. New election laws were now drawn up by the Czar and his accomplices, limiting the rules of the people and practically leaving them at the mercy of unscrupulous agents of State and Church. A great many were sentenced to be shot; others ended on the gallows; prisoners were tortured; political suspects exiled to Siberia; and Jewish massacres were on the daily program. A new reaction, mightier than ever before, now started in Russia. And the Czar diverted himself reading the Police Journal, printed daily for his exclusive use and giving a classified list of executions which, under Stolypin's regime, were more frequent in Russia than during the entire period of bloodshed known as the French Revolution.

A great change was now again inaugurated in Finnish affairs. Since 1908, M. Seyn, the most fanatic representative of the "System," has been Governor-General, with practically almost unlimited power. There he rules in the genuine Russian style (although he is a Lutheran of German descent), deposing judges and public officials; and imprisoning, or sending to Siberia, government officers, mayors and counselors. In 1913, all members of the Wiborg Supreme Court were sentenced to eight months imprisonment and transferred to penal institutions in Russia, where they received worse treatment than the lowest criminals. The charge against

these judges was their refusal—in accordance with their oath of office—to apply the illegal Russian Unity Code, and their strict adherence to Finnish law which the Czar, as Grand Duke of Finland, had sworn to respect. Without much ado these loyal jurists submitted to their unlawful punishment, conscious of suffering for the good cause, and hoping for better times, when their patriotism would be duly appreciated.

While the persecution of officials and private citizens of Finland was carried on in this manner, new barracks were built for Russian soldiers in all railroad centres and on the northwestern border against Sweden, and all preparations for sending a few hundred thousand men to the Swedish frontier at a moment's notice were completed. New forts along the shore of the Gulf of Finland have been constructed, and many hundred million roubles have been expended upon additions to the Baltic fleet.

Both the Russian Ambassador at Stockholm and his military attache, who controlled the Russian spy system in Sweden, worked so brazenly that it became necessary to recall them a year ago, the fact that spies in Sweden, Norway and Denmark were in the pay of these diplomatic officers being proven beyond doubt. Proceedings in the courts of Sweden disclosed an extensive organization of espionage. The result of the Russian envoy's underhanded work is now to be had in print: A manual for Russian army men containing a Swedish vocabulary for use in war; most carefully elaborated maps of Norland and of the entire Swedish coast; a multitude of explanatory notes on Swedish military conditions, etc., etc. There can therefore be no doubt but what the Ambassador was the chief of the spy system in Sweden—and this may be a warning to other nations.

Norway and Denmark, also, have not been spared. In the northern part of Norway tramping Russian saw-grinders, provided with maps of the country and well versed with Norwegian conditions, were found, and, in Denmark, a spy central was trapped a year ago, the wires of which established direct connection with Russia, but also with Sweden and Norway.

What, now, was the cause of Russia's anti-Finnish policy in 1913 and 1914? There was no uprising of any sort in Finland which might have justified this action on the part of Russia, nor could there be any anticipation of trouble, since the people had long

since been disarmed and, for a whole century, had proved absolutely loyal to Russia.

And what was Russia's object in sending her secret detective-corps to Sweden, Norway and Denmark?

All these were mere preparatory measures for what was yet to come as soon as Russian armaments would be completed, viz., an attack upon the Scandinavian Peninsula, with the purpose of reaching the ice-free Atlantic—in accordance with the last will and testament of Peter the Great.

The Russian fleet is cut off from the ocean by the Danish Belts in the north and by the Turkish Dardanelles in the south; since the war with Japan, Russia no longer has any ice-free port in the Pacific. The only ice-free port she still holds is way up North, near the Norwegian border, on the so-called Murmanian coast. But while the Russians are now busily engaged in extending their railroad system to that point, connection has not yet been fully established. On the other hand, it is evident that ONE ice-free port does not meet the requirements of this vast Empire.

Whenever Russian diplomats prepare to strike at anyone, it is their practice to deceive and throw the enemy off his guard by most insincere assurances of friendship. So the well-known mesalliance of Princess Maria in Sweden was used by them for the purpose of entering into commercial relations with Swedish firms which were coaxed into business transactions. These connections enabled the Russians to take closer aim at Sweden, while—in conformity with their practice—they had the chauvinistic press toot the horn of Russian friendship for Sweden and explain at length that an attack upon that country was by no means to Russia's interest. We are aware of the effect all this has had in Sweden; we have read of 30,000 Swedish peasants making a pilgrimage to the Royal Palace last year, and of three-fourths of the entire Swedish student body, on their own initiative, appearing before the Monarch a few days later, to assure him of their loyalty. These two demonstrations are probably unique in history. We do not know of any analogous case where a nation voluntarily informed their ruler of their desire to pay higher taxes for the maintenance of the army, requesting him at the same time to lengthen the term of military service so as to increase the country's defensive efficiency, and to uphold its traditional ideals of liberty. The patriotism and en-

thusiasm evinced by the Swedish people in this demonstration can be compared only with the glorious German spirit which moulded the whole nation together into one great family when the present war broke out.

In times of stress it is the custom of the Russian Government to promise reforms and the extension of privileges, and to revoke these promises again as soon as the difficulties are overcome and the Czar feels safe. In view of this policy we should expect the present war to have caused the Governor-General of Finland to treat the Finns with leniency and to relieve the strained relations. And yet, the war has in no way altered Russia's official attitude toward Finland. The Governor-General issued no proclamation to the Finnish people, as the Czar to his "Beloved Jews" and for "The Independence of Poland" (both of which, of course, later proved to be deceptions). On the contrary, General Seyn not only removed Judge Svinhufrud, the highly esteemed president of the Assembly, from his place on the bench, but exiled him to the remotest and climatically most unfavorable part of Siberia. There the unfortunate man, voluntarily accompanied by his wife, will either succumb to his heart disease, or, should he have the good fortune to be recalled, he will return to Finland a hopeless invalid. He is one of a number of prominent Finns who were exiled or imprisoned.

The only possible explanation for such a method of procedure is that Russia was convinced that Sweden would take the part of Germany. This is also the reason why a large Russian army was stationed in Finland in the early stage of the war. But although Sweden is quite pro-German, she could and would not enter into the conflict, and—in our opinion—Sweden rendered Germany and the German cause a much greater service by remaining neutral than if she had taken an active part in the war. When the war began, Scandanavian public opinion with regard to Germany's ability to endure this tremendous struggle was very much divided, and the possibility of an ultimate German victory was hardly considered. Great Britain's piracy and her practice of stealing ships were well known, and since the wealth of Denmark and, especially, of Norway, was for the most part invested in vessels and sea trade, it would have been an easy matter for England to ruin the foreign commerce of these countries.

In addition to this consideration comes the fact that Danish sympathies were, and still are, divided. Denmark, wedged in between Sweden and Germany, might, therefore, have joined the Allies, which would have made things more complicated.

No matter, then, from which point of view we may survey the situation, Sweden made a wise move in remaining neutral.

Denmark was saved by the meeting of the Scandinavian rulers at Malmö, in December, 1914, and if Russia should now attack Sweden and Norway, Denmark would certainly side with her Norse friends.

On the other hand, *the frequently expressed opinion that Sweden would welcome a chance to regain Finland is as absurd as to say that Finland is anxious to be reunited with Sweden*: The latter is entirely out of the question.

For the first time in the twenty years of his rule the Czar has now gone to Finland with the illegal object of pressing new soldiers into service, although he must be well aware that the sympathies of the Finnish people cannot possibly be with the Russia of today.

The weakness and low character of the entire Pan-Slavistic regime in Russia, and the inefficient organization of the vast Russian forces have been demonstrated since the outbreak of the war by both German and Austro-Hungarian troops and their generals to the great satisfaction of all really well-meaning and liberal-minded people throughout the world. In spite of this we read day after day the "Petrograd" reports of victories. But anyone familiar with the actual conditions knows that all this news is fictitious; that Russian politics are traditionally based upon fraud; and that the country's finances, military system and staff of public officers are rotten to the core. Only the vast millions of inhabitants of Russia, still subservient to the "Knout" of the Czar and his abettors, have enabled the government to put armies in the field. But woe to the authorities when the people learn that they have been deceived! They will then wreak vengeance and proceed in their own country with the same barbarism and bestiality which the Cossacks, soldiers and officers, practiced in East Prussia in the course of this war. The Russian mob will destroy, burn and annihilate everything; nothing will escape their fury.

The bloodshed of the coming revolution in Russia will be the most appalling in history; and Russian hatred for foreigners—Europeans and Americans—will be most bitterly expressed.

No matter how long it may take Germany, Austria-Hungary and Turkey decisively to defeat the Russian armies in this great conflict, one thing is certain: *Conditions in Russia will undergo a tremendous change after the conclusion of peace.* It is doubtful, to say the least, whether the present Czar, the Grand Ducal Commander-in-Chief and the remaining members of the Romanoff dynasty, will have any voice in the affairs of state after the Revolution. Moreover, it is always impossible to know beforehand which party will prove the strongest, but the most radical, as always in the case of revolutions, stands the best chance to win.

However this may be, *the Pan-Slavistic movement is bound to outlive the present war, and so long as it exists it will continue to threaten Europe. The sole possibility of checking and suppressing this movement for decades to come is to separate Russia's western border from Europe by neutral states.* The danger to which Sweden and Norway are exposed so long as their territories border on Russia, can be removed only by *making the present Grand Duchy of Finland a neutral state.* By doing so, i.e., by creating a state whose neutrality is guaranteed by all powers, and which is left to shift for itself, the danger of Russia securing an Atlantic port will be eliminated. And this would not be wholly a matter of indifference to Germany since, in possession of such a port, it would be possible for Russia not only to menace Scandinavia, but also the German North Sea coast.

The views of leading Finnish statesmen on this question cannot be learned just now as the few Finnish newspapers whose publication has not been stopped are not permitted to be sent abroad, and all letters are opened before leaving the country.

We know that the two races inhabiting Finland may be divided in their opinion as to certain points, but both have proven their intense patriotism on all possible occasions, and both are prepared to make the greatest sacrifices for Finnish liberty. Very few have any objection to the Russian people, but the Russian *people* has as yet nothing to say.

It is true, unfortunately, that a small fraction of the Finnish population has been bought by Russian gold, but these few will fight

in vain against a neutral independence of Finland. All inhabitants of the country are, and always have been, loyal; but, in the past twenty years, their loyalty to Russia's autocratic rule has been so sorely tried that they would surely forsake the Russian cause if there were an opportunity.

This matter is now being considered in Germany, and it is to be hoped that the efforts of its very influential supporters will be successful.

To base hopeful expectations upon the Franco-British allies is a serious mistake. The governments of these so-called "liberal minded champions of freedom" have never done anything for other countries. On the contrary, it has been British policy to conquer and suppress smaller and weaker nations whenever the opportunity presented itself, and French love of liberty—once renowned throughout the world—cannot be relied upon to-day.

Before a permanent international peace can be established, quite a number of crimes and errors recorded in the history of the last few centuries must be set aright, and non-related races must again be separated. Finland should be no exception to this rule.

There are many races which have lived side by side for centuries without amalgamating. They have preserved their own language, and they possess an ancient civilization as well as interests of their own. All, or at least the large majority of these, should be segregated from their neighbors. If, therefore, the terms of peace putting a stop to the present world conflagration include a radical alteration of the map of Europe, they will be a blessing to all mankind.

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